

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-09 NSC-10 SS-14 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-09 NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-12 PRS-01 EUR-25

T-03 SR-02 ORM-03 DPW-01 /108 R

DRAFTED BY EA/ P: STAFF: PP

3/19/73 EXT 22538

APPROVED BY EA/ P: AHROSEN

----- 095420

R 192054 Z MAR 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

USDEL FRANCE

CINCPAC

UNCLAS STATE 050186

E. O. 11652 N/ A

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: MARCH 19 INDOCHINA PRESS SUMMARY

1. ALL PAPERS FEATURE STERN LON NOL MEASURES IN WAKE OF PALACE BOMBING, INCLUDING SUSPENSION NON-GOVERNMENT PRESS, STATE OF SIEGE DECLARATION, ARREST OF ROYAL FAMILY MEMBERS, AND ORDER THAT STRIKING TEACHERS RESUME WORK. US PP SOURCE BELIEVES BOMBING WAS PERSONAL VENDETTA AGAINST LON NOL BY CAPTAIN WHO HAD FLUNKED FLIGHT TRAINING COURSE. CSM' S SOUTHERLAND SAYS BOMBING APPEARS ONE- SHOT AFFAIR AND NOT COUP ATTEMPT. CINCPAC ANNOUNCES B-52 S CONTINUE RAIDS OVER CAMBODIA, WITH HONOLULU SOURCES SAYING RAIDS IN RESPONSE TO INCREASED COMMUNIST ATTACKS ON HIGHWAY 2 SOUTH OF PP (NYT, SUN).

2. GVN COMPLAINS TO ICCS OF " FLAGRANT" COMMUNIST C- F VIOLATIONS IN SUSTAINED ATTACKS ON TWO ARVN OUTPOSTS
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50 MILES NORTH OF SAIGON. COMMUNIST JMC DELS REFUSE GVN CALL FOR INQUIRY SO GVN GOES DIRECTLY TO ICCS. MILITARY SOURCES SAY COMMUNIST GOAL TO OPEN LOC BETWEEN TWO VC- CONTROLLED AREAS (WP, NYT, SUN, CSM).

3. SHARP MEETS DONG IN HANOI ON ICCS. LATTER SAYS DRV WILL DO ALL IT CAN TO KEEP VN PEACE, BUT SAYS PEACE AND REUNIFICATION GO HAND IN HAND AND " SOMETIMES PEACE IS DIFFICULT" (WP).

4. FIRST SMALL GROUP OF REFUGEES DUE RETURN SOON TO FORMER HOMES IN QUANG TRI PROVINCE DESPITE REPORTS OF COMMUNIST BUILDUP THERE AIMED AT ANOTHER POSSIBLE EFFORT TO TAKE HUE. GVN UNDER PRESSURE TO GET REFUGEES OUT OF CROWDED CAMPS AND BACK INTO PRODUCTIVE WORK. ALSO, PEOPLE, THEMSELVES, WANT TO GO HOME. US OFFICIAL SAYS COMMUNIST BUILDUP " NOT VERY ENCOURAGING" AS RATE OF CURRENT BUILDUP WILL SOON BRING COMMUNISTS UP TO STRENGTH THEY HAD PRIOR TO 1972 SPRING OFFENSIVE. US OFFICIAL THINKS IT UNLIKELY COMMUNISTS WOULD BE PERMITTED MOUNT MAJOR OFFENSIVE WITHOUT US AIR POWER BEING REINTRODUCED (WP, LIPP-MAN).

5. GVN AND COMMUNISTS TO COMPLETE EXCHANGE OF VN POWS BY NEXT SUNDAY, THREE DAYS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE -- TOTAL OF 26,700 GVN RELEASEES AND 4200 BY COMMUNISTS. 6308 AMERICAN TROOPS STILL IN COUNTRY DUE OUT BY MARCH 28 (NYDN).

6. AIR VIETNAM DC-4 CRASH IN CENTRAL HIGHLANDS KILLS 59. TWO AMERICAN CREWMEN ABOARD BUT NO US PASSENGERS. INVESTIGATION UNDERWAY TO DETERMINE IF PLANE HIT BY GROUND FIRE (WP).

7. SWEDEN TURNS BACK TWO GIS TO US MILITARY AUTHORITIES, SAYING IT WON' T GRANT ASYLUM TO SOLDIERS WHO DESERT AFTER VN C- F (NYDN).

8. POST' S BERGER SYMPATHETICALLY DESCRIBES DOS AIDE SIEVERTS' ROLE DURING PAST SIX YEARS IN USG EFFORTS TO GET POWS HOME AND TO IMPROVE THEIR LOT WHILE IN UNCLASSIFIED

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CAPTIVITY, NOTES GRATITUDE OF POW FAMILIES FOR HIS

" COMPASSION" AND HONESTY IN DEALING WITH THEM OVER YEARS (WP).

9. CSM' S SOUTHERLAND, DESCRIBES POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY DETERIORATION IN CAMBODIA. NOTES SOME OF STAUNCHEST SUPPORTERS OF LON NOL GOVERNMENT HAVE BECOME ITS SHARPEST CRITICS- AMERICANS WOULD LIKE RETURN TO GOVERNMENT OF SIRIK MATAK, WHOM THEY CONSIDER EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR. SIRIK MATAK HAS MADE IT CLEAR HE WILL ACCEPT VICE- PRESIDENCY ONLY IF LON NOL IS PREVENTED FROM INTERFERING WITH HIS DECISIONS. APPARENT UNITY AND COHESION AT TOP LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORT OF PHNOM PENH YOUTH HAVE BEEN LOST. WAR HAS CHANGED FROM ONE OF RESISTENCE TO INVA- SION BY VN COMMUNISTS INTO SOMETHING MUCH CLOSER TO

CIVIL WAR; BUT INSURGENTS ARE IN NO HURRY EITHER TO NEGOTIATE OR OVERTHROW GOVERNMENT. THEY AND VN ALLIES SEEM CONCENTRATING ON CONSOLIDATING STRENGTH IN COUNTRYSIDE AND BUILDING FOR LONG " PEOPLE' S WAR."

10. ANTHONY LEWIS (NYT), IN LONDON, OBSERVES DISTINC- TION PRESIDENT MADE BETWEEN WEAPONS FOR LARGE- SCALE COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE IN SVN AND ROUTINE RESUPPLY AND REINFORCEMENT. DISTINCTION REFLECTS CURRENT US POLITICAL REALITIES. AMERICANS RELIEVED TO SEE US ROLE IN VN ENDING, PREPARED TO CLOSE EYES TO MUCH CONTINUED FIGHTING AMONG VIETNAMESE. BUT IF OTHER SIDE MOVES TOO QUICKLY AND TOO CRUDELY TO UPSET PEACE TERMS, NIXON MIGHT WELL HAVE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INTERVENING AGAIN. RETURN OF LAST US POW WILL REDUCE DIRECT US CONCERN WITH C- F VIOLATIONS BY BOTH SIDES, BUT COULD ALSO WEAKEN RESTRAINTS ON US POLICY.

11. WSJ' S KEATLEY OBSERVES THAT WARRING SIDES IN VN HAVEN' T ABANDONED CAUSES FOR WHICH THEY FOUGHT. DEEP DISTRUST REMAINS; AND WASHINGTON AND HANOI DON' T TRUST EACH OTHER. NIXON WANTS US FORCES OUT OF INDO- CHINA, BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE. HE WANTS STATUS QUO WHILE OTHER NATIONS ADJUST TO SOME NEW POLITICAL REALITIES. SEES LITTLE PROMISE OF LASTING PEACE AND UNCLASSIFIED

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REAL US DISENGAGEMENT IN FORESEEABLE FUTURE.

12. WSJ' S BARRY KRAMER, IN SAIGON, DESCRIBES HEALTH PROBLEMS. NOTES GVN USES ONLY 2.4 PERCENT OF ITS INCOME - OR SLIGHTLY MORE THAN \$1 PER CAPITA - TO

IMPROVE HEALTH OF 18 MILLION PEOPLE. US PROGRAM PROVIDES ANOTHER 55 CENTS PER PERSON, MUCH OF IT IN PHARMACEUTICALS AND OTHER HEALTH SUPPLIES. ATTRIBUTES TO USAID OFFICIAL WARNING THAT IT WOULD BE FOLLY FOR WEALTHY FOREIGNERS, MOTIVATED BY COMPASSION, ATTEMPT HELP VIETNAMESE BY SUPPLYING MODERN HOSPITALS AND OTHER ADVANCED MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY TOO QUICKLY. ROGERS

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** UNCLASSIFIED

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE050186
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: STAFF: PP
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: n/a
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SECSTATE WASHDC
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730334/aaaaicpl.tel
Line Count: 180
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN EAP
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: collinp0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07-Dec-2001 by hagers>; APPROVED <01-Feb-2002 by collinp0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> wfs 971217
Subject: MARCH 19 INDOCHINA PRESS SUMMARY
TAGS: PFOR, US, XC
To: BANGKOK
CINCPAC
FRANCE
PHNOM PENH
SAIGON
VIENTIANE
Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005